

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 08090

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, UK
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC DATA: PETER JAY, THE MAN MOST
LIKELY . . .

REF: LONDON 7906

1. TO UNDERSTAND JAY, IT IS INSTRUCTIVE TO EXAMINE HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND, FOR THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT HIS NOTABLE INTELLECTUAL BRILLIANCE, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR ARE PRODUCTS OF BOTH HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT. HIS FATHER, THE RT. HON. DOUGLAS JAY, A LABOR MP, IS AN OXFORD GRADUATE (FIRST CLASS HONORS), A FORMER SCHOLAR, JOURNALIST, AUTHOR, AND CIVIL SERVANT, WHO SINCE AGE 40 HAS BEEN A SUCCESSFUL POLITICIAN, THOUGH NOT OF THE FIRST RANK. HIS MOTHER, THE FORMER MARGARET GARNETT, IS THE DAUGHTER OF A UNIVERSITY DON AND WAS HERSELF ACTIVE IN POLITICS, SERVING SEVERAL TERMS ON THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL. WHILE THE JAY FAMILY LACKED INHERITED WEALTH, IT WAS COMFORTABLY WELL OFF AND EXHIBITED MANY OF THE BEST QUALITIES OF THE BRITISH UPPER MIDDLE CLASS -- A SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, A DRIVE FOR INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL LIFE, AN EMPHASIS ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, AN APPRECIATION FOR CULTURE AND CONFIDENCE AS TO ITS PLACE IN
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THE WORLD. DOUGLAS JAY'S POSITION, FIRST AS PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO PRIME MINISTER CLEMENT ATLEE, LATER AS MP, JUNIOR MINISTER AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, EXPOSED PETER TO POLITICAL THOUGHT AND LEADING POLITICAL FIGURES FROM AN EARLY AGE.

2. PETER'S LIFE, IN MANY RESPECTS, HAS FOLLOWED A

PATTERN SET BY HIS FATHER. BOTH STARTED AT WINCHESTER SCHOOL, WHERE PETER EXCELLED AND WAS HEADBOY. BEFORE MOVING TO UNIVERSITY, HE SERVED TWO YEARS (1956-57)

NAVY RESERVE, FIRST AS A MIDSHIPMAN AND THEN AS A SUB-LIEUTENANT. HE FOLLOWED HIS FATHER TO OXFORD WHERE HE ENTERED CHRIST CHURCH COLLEGE. SUCCESS CONTINUED TO COME EASILY, OR AT LEAST WITH THE APPEARANCE OF EASE. THE YOUNGER JAY WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE OXFORD UNION (1960) WITH THE LARGEST MAJORITY EVER RECORDED AND GRADUATED WITH FIRST CLASS HONORS IN POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY AND ECONOMICS. HE WAS REPUTEDLY THE MOST BRILLIANT STUDENT OF HIS GENERATION. JAY STAYED ON AT OXFORD TO DO GRADUATE WORK IN ECONOMICS AT NUFFIELD COLLEGE. BUT HE SUFFERED A SETBACK WHEN HE FAILED TO OBTAIN A FELLOWSHIP AT ALL SOULS COLLEGE. JAY LEFT OXFORD BEFORE COMPLETING HIS GRADUATE STUDIES TO ENTER THE CIVIL SERVICE, TAKING A POST IN THE PRESTIGIOUS TREASURY DEPARTMENT. HE REMAINED AT TREASURY FOR SIX YEARS, SERVING AS PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PERMANENT SECRETARY, ATTAINING THE RANK OF PRINCIPAL AND REINFORCING HIS REPUTATION.

3. JAY LEFT TREASURY IN 1967 TO BECOME ECONOMICS EDITOR OF THE TIMES, QUICKLY IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE PAPER'S ECONOMIC REPORTING AND ANALYSIS AND EXPANDING ITS READERSHIP, THOUGH HIS TARGET AUDIENCE WAS THE DECISION MAKERS, PARTICULARLY IN WHITEHALL. NOT THE AVERAGE READER. POSSIBLY TIRING OF THE ROUTINE, JAY IN 1972 ACCEPTED AN OFFER TO ANCNOR INDEPENDENT CONFIDENTIAL

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TV'S WEEKEND WORLD PROGRAM. WHILE RETAINING HIS TIMES JOB. SUCCESS AGAIN CAME QUICKLY: HE WAS NAMED "POLITICAL BROADCASTER OF THE YEAR" IN 1973, AND "MALE PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR" IN 1974. HE ALSO RECEIVED THE "FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR" AWARD IN 1973 FOR HIS WORK ON THE TIMES AND ITV. THUS HIS "STAR QUALITY" WAS AFFIRMED.

4. WHILE AT OXFORD, JAY MET THE BLONDE MARGARET ANN CALLAGHAN, DAUGHTER OF LABOR MP JAMES CALLAGHAN. THEY WERE MARRIED IN 1961. MRS. JAY IS AN ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT AND ARTICULATE WOMAN. OBVIOUSLY AT EASE IN HER HUSBAND'S WORLD. THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN, TAMSIN (11), ALICE (9), AND PATRICK (5). THE JAYS LIVE IN LONDON, AND HAVE A VACATION HOME IN IRELAND (COUNTY CORK).

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ACTION INR-07

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5. GIVEN HIS BACKGROUND, IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT JAY DEVELOPED A DEEP INTEREST IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ECONOMICS AND IS A MEMBER OF THE LABOR PARTY' ALBEIT A RIGHT-WINGER. HIS NAME HAS BEEN ON THE PARTY'S LIST OF QUALIFIED PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES FOR SEVERAL YEARS, AND IN 1969 HE SOUGHT THE NOMINATION FOR THE SAFE LABOR SEAT OF LSLINGTON NORTH. MUCH TO HIS REPORTED SURPRISE, THE LOCAL PARTY CHOSE A TRADE UNIONIST HAVING A STRONG LOCAL FOLLOWING, AND WHO SITS AS A SECURE, BUT UN-DISTINGUISHED, BACKBENCHER. THIS WAS JAY'S SECOND MAJOR FAILURE. NEVERTHELESS, HE WOULD STILL LIKE TO ENTER PARLIAMENT AND, PRESUMABLY, A FUTURE LABOR GOVERNMENT. HIS PROBLEM. ACCORDING TO ONE OF OUR LABOR PARTY SOURCES' IS THAT HE WANTS A SECURE SEAT WHEN HIS BEST CHANCES FOR NOMINATION WOULD BE WITH A MARGINAL SEAT WHERE HIS CELEBRITY STATUS COULD MAKE THE MOST DIFFERENCE. THUS FAR HE HAS ESCHEWED THAT STRATEGY. UNTIL APPROACHED BY FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN ABOUT THE AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTMENT IN WASHINGTON, JAY HAD BEEN THINKING OF ACCEPTING A FELLOWSHIP AT NUFFIELD COLLEGE TO ENHANCE HIS ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS AND TO ALLOW HIMSELF TIME TO COMPLETE A BOOK ON MARKET SOCIALISM.

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6. AT LEAST TWO COMMON THREADS -- BESIDES HIS INTELLECTUAL ABILITY AND GENERAL PATTERN OF SUCCESS -- ARE APPARENT IN NEARLY ALL COMMENTS ABOUT JAY. FIRST, THERE IS HIS ARROGANCE. HIGHLIGHTED BY ALL COMMENTATORS -- BUT WITH VARYING DEGREES OF MALICE -- IT IS CLEARLY AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN HOW HE IS PERCEIVED BY OTHERS. FROM OUR STRICTLY SOCIAL OBSERVATIONS, IT IS BY NO MEANS OVERBEARING, AND SEEMS TO TAKE THE FORM OF CASUAL SELF-ASSURANCE AND CONFIDENCE THAT ARE FREQUENTLY OBSERVED AMONG MIDDLE CLASS GRADUATES OF ENGLISH PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND OXBRIDGE. AND IN FEW CASES WOULD IT SEEM AS APPROPRIATE. THE POINT IS THAT THIS PERCEIVED ARROGANCE DOES CAUSE RESENTMENT WHICH IS CLEARLY EVIDENT, INTER ALIA. AMONG YOUNGER LABOR MPS AND, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, STAFFERS AT THE TIMES. THE SECOND THREAD IS MORE OFTEN IMPLIED. NO ONE WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN NOR AMONG COMMENTATORS WE HAVE READ, HAS QUESTIONED JAY'S BRILLIANCE OR HIS CLEVERNESS, THOUGH THE FORMER IS SOMETIMES QUALIFIED WITH SUCH WORDS AS PRECOCIOUS AND THE LATTER OFTEN IMPLIES A CERTAIN SUPERFICIALITY. THESE REFERENCES SUGGEST QUESTIONS AS TO HIS ASTUTENESS, BALANCE AND INTELLECTUAL MATURITY. WHETHER THESE ALLUSIONS MERELY REFLECT RESENTMENT AND JEALOUSY, OR INDICATE A CERTAIN CHARACTER DEFICIENCY, WE ARE UNABLE TO SAY. JAY, HOWEVER, CAN BE CHARMING, HOSPITABLE AND GENEROUS, QUALITIES THAT SHOULD STAND HIM IN GOOD STEAD IN WASHINGTON.

7. JAY SHARES CALLAGHAN'S PRO-US BIAS, BUT ALSO MANIFESTS SOME OVERTLY ANTI-EUROPEAN ATTITUDES, PRESUMABLY REFLECTING THE INFLUENCE OF HIS FATHER, WHO REMAINS AN UNRECONSTRUCTED ANTI-EC LABORITE. IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW THIS PREDISPOSITION MAY AFFECT HIS RELATIONS WITH HIS EC COLLEAGUES IN WASHINGTON, BUT HIS STRONGLY FAVORABLE TILT TOWARD THE US SHOULD REINFORCE CURRENT

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US/UK RELATIONS. IN 1974, JAY WROTE THAT BRITISH DEMOCRACY WOULD PROBABLY BE SUSPENDED BY 1980, "GIVE OR TAKE A FEW YEARS". HE SUPPORTED THIS UNHAPPY PREDICTION WITH A CAREFUL ANALYSIS OF THE FORCES AT WORK IN THE BRITISH ECONOMY AND, AT LEAST PUBLICLY, HAS NOT REVISED THIS VIEW. SINCE THAT TIME, THIS VISION OF THE FUTURE SEEMS TO HAVE UNDERPINNED MUCH OF HIS OTHER WRITINGS. AS THE SUNDAY TIMES NOTED IN AN EDITORIAL DISCUSSION OF JAY'S NEW ROLE AS THE "SALESMAN" FOR BRITISH INTERESTS IN WASHINGTON, "THIS IS THE STUFF OF FINE JOURNALISM, BUT NOT SO OBVIOUSLY OF SALESMANSHIP". CLEARLY, JAY WILL HAVE TO MAKE THE TRANSFORMATION FROM

GLOOMY JOURNALIST TO "BULLISH CHEERLEADER" AND THAT
MAY NOT BE AN EASY TASK. HIS DEPRESSING VIEW OF
BRITAIN'S FUTURE MAY ALSO LIE AT THE ROOT OF THE SHIFT,
IN RECENT YEARS, OF HIS ECONOMIC VIEWPOINT FROM THAT OF
A KEYNESIAN SOCIALIST TOWARD THAT OF A FRIEDMANITE
MONETARIST. BUT THEN A SIMILAR SHIFT HAS TAKEN PLACE
IN THE GOVERNING WING OF THE LABOR PARTY ITSELF.

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Message Attributes

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